AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of treating viral infections in a patient which method comprises co-administering to said patient a therapeutically effective amount of interferon and a ~~low~~ dose of ribavirin, wherein at least said ribavirin is administered in a slow-release formulation at a dosage of less than 400 mg ribavirin per day to provide a clinically effective blood level in a portal vein and less than required to provide a clinically effective blood level in a peripheral circulation to thereby provide a dose-delivery rate having a selective antiviral and interferon potentiating effect in a liver of the patient.

Claims 2-4 (Canceled).

5. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 41, wherein the ~~controlled~~slow-release formulation releases ribavirin by a mechanism chosen from diffusion and erosion.

6. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 41, wherein the ~~controlled~~slow-release formulation of ribavirin comprises at least one of polymer-coated multiparticulates, polymer-coated tablets, polymer-coated minitablets, and hydrophilic matrix tablets.

Claims 7-8 (Canceled).

9. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 81, wherein the ribavirin dose is in the range of from 20 to 350 mg/day.

10. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the ribavirin dose is varied according to the body weight of the patient.

11. (Original) A method according to claim 10, wherein the ribavirin dose is less than 6 mg/kg/day.

12. (Original) A method according to claim 11, wherein the ribavirin dose is less than 5 mg/kg/day.

13. (Original) A method according to claim 12, wherein the ribavirin dose is in the range of from 1 to 5 mg/kg/day.

14. (Original) The method according to claim 13, wherein the viral infection is hepatitis C.

15. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the ribavirin is in the form of at least one of a ribavirin ester, salt, or analogue of ribavirin shown to be effective as an antiviral agent.

16. (Original) The method according to claim 15, wherein the interferon is interferon alfa or pegylated interferon alfa.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the interferon is interferon alfa 2b.

18. (Original) The method according to claim 17, wherein the interferon is administered parenterally.

19. (Original) The method according to claim 18, wherein the interferon is administered by subcutaneous IV or IM injection.

20. (Original) The method according to claim 19, wherein the interferon is administered parenterally in an amount of from 2 to 10 million IU per week on a weekly, thrice weekly ("TIW"), every other day ("QOD") or daily basis.

21. (Original) The method according to claim 16, wherein the pegylated interferon alfa is pegylated interferon alfa-2b and is administered systemically in an amount of 0.5 to 2.0 micrograms per kilogram of body weight per week on a weekly, TIW, QOD or daily basis.

22. (Original) A method according to claim 16, wherein the pegylated interferon alfa is pegylated interferon alfa-2a and is administered systemically in an amount of 20 to 250 micrograms per kilogram of body weight per week on a weekly, TIW, QOD or daily basis.

23. (Currently Amended) A method of treating viral infections in a patient which comprises co-administering to said patient a therapeutically effective amount of interferon with less than 400 mg/day of ribavirin which is administered as a slow release formulation.

Claims 24-26 (Canceled).

27. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 2326, wherein the ribavirin ~~dose~~ is provided in a dosage~~the~~ range of from 5 to 399 mg/day.

28. (Canceled).

29. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 2328 further comprising administering systemic doses of an antioxidant or other membrane protective agent ~~which is administered in systemic doses~~.

30. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 2328 further comprising administering an antioxidant or other membrane protective agent ~~which is administered~~ as a ~~low-dose,~~ slow-release formulation.

31. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 2328, further comprising administering an antioxidant or other membrane protective agent which is co-formulated with the ribavirin as a ~~low-dose,~~ slow-release formulation.

32. (Canceled)

33. (Currently Amended) A kit for use in the treatment of viral infections comprising a therapeutically effective amount of interferon in combination with ribavirin and optionally an antioxidant or other membrane protective agent as a slow-release formulation comprising less than 400 mg per day of ribavirin.

Claims 34-35 (Canceled).

36. (Currently Amended) A kit according to claim 3335 wherein the slow-release formulation of ribavirin comprises at least one of polymer-coated multiparticulates, polymer-coated tablets, polymer-coated minitablets, and hydrophilic matrix tablets.

37. (Canceled).

38. (Currently Amended) A kit according to claim 3335 wherein a~~the~~ unit dose of ribavirin is less than 6 mg/kg/day.

39. (Original) A kit according to claim 33 wherein the ribavirin is in the form of at least one of a ribavirin ester, salt or analogue or ribavirin shown to be effective as an antiviral agent.

40. (Original) A kit according to claim 33 wherein the interferon is in a form for parenteral administration.

41. (Original) A kit according to claim 33 comprising unit doses of interferon for providing an amount of from 2 to 10 million IU per week by thrice weekly ("TIW"), every other day ("QOD") or daily administration.

42. (Original) A kit according to claim 33 wherein the interferon is interferon alfa or pegylated interferon alfa.

43. (Currently Amended) A pharmaceutical composition for the treatment of viral infections in a patient comprising a therapeutically effective amount of interferon together with ~~a low dose of~~ ribavirin and optionally an antioxidant or other membrane protective agent, wherein a daily dosage amount of the pharmaceutical composition contains less than 400 mg of ribavirin.